

Congresswoman Matsui's Statement In Defense of AmeriCorps Funding

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Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Matsui spoke today in defense of funding for the renowned AmeriCorps service program, funding threatened by the Stearns Amendment to the Labor-HHS appropriations bill.

“Madam Chairman, I rise in opposition of the Stearns Amendment to the FY 2008 Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. This amendment would cut vital funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service. I am proud to be a part of those standing up in support of the Corporation. I believe strongly that the programs supported by the Corporation embody the spirit of the American people, and it is important for Members of Congress to continue to support these programs.

As a Co-Chair of the National Service Caucus, it is a pleasure to call attention to the tremendous work of those involved at every level and in every program of the Corporation. As a part of the Corporation, AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service. Since AmeriCorps was established in 1994, AmeriCorps members have performed over 637 million hours of service that help in each of our communities.

Through programs such as AmeriCorps State and National, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), AmeriCorps volunteers address critical needs in our communities.

These generous men and women help supplement opportunities and programs in the areas of education, public safety, disaster response and recovery, and environment preservation.

As a result of the great work of AmeriCorps members, extraordinary things are happening all around America. The Corporation supports such important non-profit organizations as Habitat for Humanity, City Year, Red Cross and Teach for America. AmeriCorps volunteers have built homes, healed wounds, and taught elementary school kids. These volunteers are part of the backbone of America.

With very little funding, AmeriCorps members leverage millions of dollars and perform crucial work in classrooms, in

National Parks, and in areas of our nation hit by disaster. As a result, I hope that my colleagues will support AmeriCorps programs and vote against this amendment. The spirit of service that is so important to all of our communities is one that should be encouraged, not stripped of federal support.

Madam Chairman, I want to extend my greatest appreciation to those who have served our country through AmeriCorps programs. These volunteers have embraced the American spirit of volunteerism, and they are to be applauded for their service.

I strongly urge my colleagues to reject this misguided amendment.”

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